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**TWO CENTURIES IN TIVERTON:
OSBORN-BENNETT HISTORIC DISTRICT LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER**

A cluster of historic buildings in a rural landscape in Tiverton has received federal recognition for its contributions to the history of agriculture, architecture, and community planning. Frederick C. Williamson, Chairman of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC), announced that the National Park Service has added the Osborn-Bennett Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the Federal Government's official list of properties throughout the United States whose historical and architectural significance makes them worthy of preservation. The Osborn-Bennett Historic District reflects Tiverton's evolution from an eighteenth-century agricultural town to a modern suburban community. Its coherent group of well-preserved historic buildings includes excellent examples of the Federal and Italianate styles set in a landscape that retains its agricultural character. The district is also notable for its enduring connection to the Osborn family.

The Osborn-Bennett Historic District contains four houses, nine associated outbuildings or ruins, a cemetery, and landscape features such as open fields and stone walls located along Main Road in Tiverton north of Route 24. Tiverton was first settled by English colonists during the seventeenth century. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the economy of Tiverton focused on agriculture and maritime activities. Main Road, which forms the spine of the Osborn-

Bennett Historic District, was laid out around 1683, providing a direct overland route between Tiverton Four Corners to the south and Fall River, Massachusetts to the north.

Attracted by the relatively flat arable land and the convenient location along Main Road, Thomas Osborn (1766-1833) purchased land for a homestead farm and erected a house on Main Road about 1790. With a five-bay-wide, two-story, side-gable main block; center entry with transom lights; and center chimney, the house exhibits the massing and detailing of the Federal style. When Thomas Osborn died in 1833, he was buried to the southeast of the residence, in what is now the Osborn Family Cemetery, a small burial ground containing about 35 grave markers. In 1883, the Osborn family conveyed the property to the town and erected a large granite monument at the west end of the cemetery in that year. The stone walls and iron gate may have been installed at the same time. The cemetery remains in active use today.

By 1850, the farm and house was owned by Thomas Osborn, Jr., who raised livestock and grew grains and produce on the 100-acre property. After his death in 1884, the property passed to his daughter, Ann Eliza, and her husband, Henry B. Gardner. The Gardners continued to farm the property at 1168 Main Road well into the twentieth century. The house is presently owned by Henry Clay Osborn IV and Jason W. Osborn, both great-great-great-grandsons of the first Thomas Osborn.

Two additional Osborn houses, both owned by family member Judge Joseph Osborn, were constructed around 1845. They both exhibit elements of the Italianate style, including elaborate, wrap-around porches with turned-wood posts; tall, narrow window openings; and decorative wood brackets at the eaves. Judge Joseph Osborn (1803-1883) had a distinguished career as a farmer, livestock trader, investor in Fall River's cotton mills, banker, judge on the Court of Common Pleas, state representative, and, for 44 years, Tiverton's treasurer. His two houses remained in the family until the second half of the twentieth century.

The second oldest house in the district was built by Edward Bennett (1792-1830) across the street from the original Osborn homestead. Bennett purchased the land and erected a one-and-one-half-story Cape around 1822. It is a five-bay-wide, center-entry and center-chimney Federal-style house. The property was sold at least four times between 1830 and 1867, when James Otis Hambly (1837-1912), a farmer and butcher, acquired the property. The house was occupied by members of the Hambly family until at least 1936.

The National Register nomination for the Osborn-Bennett District was prepared by preservation consultant Joanna Doherty and Virginia Adams of PAL, Inc. According to Edward F. Sanderson, executive director of the RIHPHC, “The Osborn-Bennett Historic District, situated today on the edge of suburban development, is a remarkable survivor from Tiverton's early rural character two centuries ago.”

In addition to honoring a property for its contribution to local, state, or national history, listing on the National Register provides additional benefits. It results in special consideration during the planning of Federal or federally assisted projects and makes properties eligible for Federal and Rhode Island tax benefits for historic rehabilitation projects. Owners of private property listed on the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose. As the state office for historic preservation, the Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is responsible for reviewing and submitting Rhode Island nominations to the National Register.

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